

MS 11068



THE
SOCIETY of
WOMEN MUSICIANS
(Inc.)

FINAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL AND HONORARY TREASURER

President: Margaret Paterson
Chairman: Joan Davies
Hon. Treasurer: Muriel Dawson

Council Members: Judith Baxter
Margaret Benselin
Anne Berenska
Rosemary Brown
Gwyneth George
Carola Grindee
Dora Hanes
Angela Hickey
Cynthia Isserlis
Carolyn Kimball
Joan Littlejohn
Jennifer Partridge
Eleanor Retellack
Eleanor Richards
Betty Roe
Grace Shearer
Delia Woolford
Marian Attwood)
Barbara Bendixson) (co-opted)

Ag. Hon. Sec: Grace Barrons Richardson



The last Report and Address List issued covered the year ending on 30th June, 1971, but included reports on the Diamond Jubilee Concert and 60th Birthday Party, which took place in July.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: The 1971 Meeting was held, by kind invitation of Sir Val Duncan, Chairman of Rio Tinto Zinc at 6 St. James's Square, London, on Wednesday, 27th October, 1971. It was not possible to follow the proceedings with the usual concert, as the hall is not licensed for public performances. A long discussion took place on the future of the Society, and the Chairman's proposition that a referendum be held to decide whether or not the Society should be dissolved was carried. Referendum forms were sent out in February, 1972, and members were subsequently notified of the decision of a majority to dissolve the Society. Many kind letters and expressions of regret were received, together with comments on the degree to which the Society had fulfilled its purposes.

This Report is therefore the final Report of the Council and Hon. Treasurer to members, and is presented with apologies for the unusual delay. The circumstances have been such that the procedures necessary for the dissolution of the Society have made many demands on the honorary officers, which has been particularly hard on those with prior commitments.

AUDITIONS: One audition was arranged by Anna Berenske and, in thanking her and the members of the panel, the Council feels sure that members also will share their regret that the dissolution of the Society means that this service to young up-and-coming performers (admittedly something of a drop in the ocean!) can no longer be offered.

IVIMEY CONCERTS: There were the usual five concerts held during the year 1971-72, and the Council, on behalf of members, records thanks to Dr. and Mrs. Feldman, who for so many years have graciously allowed the use of their drawing-room, to Carolyn Kimball for providing a north London venue on one occasion, to Margaret Bissett, who has done so many things for the Society over very many years, to Veronica Mansfield, who has provided a charming meeting-place for so many of these concerts, to Mr. and Mrs. Marlow, whose studio has been made available to the Society on innumerable occasions and for a variety of purposes, and, finally, to Eleanor Retallack for maintaining these concerts for as long as it was possible to arrange them.

MASTER-CLASSES: Joan Littlejohn agreed to take over arrangements for these from Noreen Mason, who had had such a long record of help to the Society particularly in this field and Judith Baxter kindly helped with publicity and secretarial work. Plans were started for a course for conductors, but very many difficulties were met and the class eventually held was one in general musicianship and public performance for soloists and small ensembles, taken by Antony Hopkins in the St. Andrew's Hall of the Royal Over-Seas League on Sunday, 11th June, 1972. The audience was very small in number, which was yet another pointer to the Society's inability to maintain this service without serious financial loss. The Council regrets that courses of such potential help to young musicians can no longer be sponsored.

RECITALS: An innovation was a lunch-hour concert held on 24th November, 1971, in the Lounge of the premises of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Chapel. Unfortunately, although considerable advertising had been undertaken and the refreshments were most generously given, this event did not attract the support of many members and ran at a loss.

An outstanding recital was given by Mary Nemet and Efrangcon Davies in the Recital Room of the Royal Academy of Music on 28th January, 1972. The lack of attendance at this concert was a positive embarrassment to the Council, particularly as the performers, one of whom is a member, had come from as far afield as Australia, and had offered to play especially for the Society in the course of an exhausting European tour.

A concert was held at the Royal Over-Seas League on the 19th May given by a Youth Orchestra and Girls' Choir from Köping, Sweden, for which admission was free. The event was light-hearted and the standard of performance about that of a typical youth club choir and the orchestra of a rather small school. Those members who attended enjoyed the evident enthusiasm of the young people. Now that the United Kingdom is in the E.E.C. doubtless such exchanges will increase in number.

OPERA Marian Attwood kindly agreed to continue to organize these, but, in the event, a visit to "Falstaff" at Covent Garden in November, 1971, was the only booking which drew support.

CHRISTMAS PARTY: Once more Sir Keith Falkner kindly allowed the Society to hold its annual celebration in the Concert Hall of the Royal College of Music. Those good friends to the Society, Phyllis Sellick and Cyril Smith, played a number of works which, as ever, gave the audience the greatest pleasure. Betty Roe also added lively items to the general excitement, and the programme included the usual opportunity for all to join in singing a few favourite carols. The Chairman, Eleanor Retallack and Judith Baxter undertook the provision and decoration of the tree and it was a delightful touch to have trays of small gifts to share with members.

FINAL PARTY: The President most generously held a final party for members at her home on the 24th June, 1972, at which the Endellion Ensemble played works by Malcolm Arnold and Mary Chendler. The pleasure of those members who had attended so many enjoyable evenings there was tinged with unavoidable regret.

DONATIONS: Many members have continued to show generosity, especially as regards the build-up of the Award Fund which, as will be seen from the Treasurer's report, reached nearly £4,000., having benefitted to the extent that Life Members donated the unexpired portion of their Subscriptions and that many annual Subscribers allowed Subscriptions overpaid to be retained.

OBITUARY: The Council records with deep regret the deaths of:-

Dorothea Aspinall,
Emily Collins-Cox,
Astra Desmond,
Jean Norris,
Kathleen Riddick,
Jennie Ruggles-Gates,
Dorothea Vincent,
Sir William Harris,
Anthony Richards.

The Council is most grateful to the Hon. Treasurer for all the work she has undertaken in the prolonged process of the winding-up of the Society. She has been the honorary officer most closely involved at all stages and therefore best qualified to report

thereon and on the arrangements made regarding the annual prize voted in the Referendum and advised to members in circular letter of 27th March, 1972.

Members will be gratified to read the attached letter from Lord Elworthy, Chairman of the Royal Over-Seas League.

"At a recent meeting of our Central Council we were told of the very generous offer from the now dissolved Society of Women Musicians to transfer the assets of the Society to the Royal Over-Seas League on the understanding that the sum realised will be invested and the income be used for presenting the following prizes at our Annual Music Festival: one prize to be awarded to the best woman musician taking part in the Festival and in alternate years a prize to be awarded to a woman composer and in both cases we would be glad to arrange for these prizes to be identified with the name of your Society, by referring to them, for instance, as the Society of Women Musicians Award.

As mentioned in your letter of 17th March to Miss Strange our Director of Music and Art, we will gladly arrange for the specialist panel to whom you refer, e.g. Lennox Berkeley, Dr. Gordon Jacob, Nicholas Maw, and Ivor Walsworth to adjudicate in respect of this composer's prize. We plan to credit the assets to an existing fund of ours called the Evelyn Wrench Memorial Fund which was set up in 1970 - the League's Diamond Jubilee Year - in memory of our Founder and for the encouragement of the Arts in the Commonwealth. It only remains for me on behalf of our Central Council to extend to you and the other former members of your Society our warmest thanks for giving the League this opportunity to make these additional awards at our Annual Festival which I am glad to say has now made quite a name for itself in the Music World."

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To all members, new and old, the Council sends its thanks for past support of the Society and its good wishes for them in the coming years.

REPORT OF THE HONORARY TREASURER

I have to report that the Dissolution of the Society was proceeded with in accordance with the Members' vote on the Referendum circulated in February, 1972. The vote also favoured devoting the Society's assets to providing an annual prize for a woman musician for outstanding achievements. Legal advice was sought as to the best way to establish a Fund for this purpose, and opinion was that we should seek another Institution or Music Society who would accept responsibility for the Fund within its own administration and within the Charities Act. After consideration the Council agreed that the Royal Over-Seas League seemed ready-made for the purpose in that they have an established Music Department under the Directorship of Miss Audrey Strange, whom many will remember as a former Honorary Officer of S.W.M.; also that they hold an annual Competition with Miss Joan Davies, Chairmen of S.W.M., as Chairman of their Audition Panel.

The Central Council of the Royal Over-Seas League accepted warmly the opportunity we presented them to offer at their Annual Music Festival a "Society of Women Musicians Award". In this way we hope to have assured that the Society's name will be perpetuated.

The Society's books were closed finally at 30th June 1973, and the final audited accounts signed by Messrs. Yeatman Melbourn & Co. on 20th September 1973. Much care was taken to conserve the Society's funds during the long and unproductive period of the dissolution, and it is gratifying to report that assets valued £3,893. have been transferred to the Royal Over-Seas League. This includes proceeds of sale of the grand piano, the Cobbett Library, and the balance of the most successful Jubilee Event. Such a sum should produce income for a worthwhile annual Award.

A copy of the accounts is available from the Hon. Treasurer to any member wishing to examine them.

23.10.73.